



Centre for Veterinary Epidemiological Research
Annual General Meeting
AVC 280N, 11 March 2019, 10:15 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Attendees:

Dr. Mohamed Afifi
Holly Burnley
Dr. Marina Delphino
Dr. Ibrahim ElSohaby
Dr. Beibei Jia
Dr. Emilie Laurin
Dr. Shawn McKenna
Dr. Omid Nekouei
Dr. Thitiwan Patanasatienkul
Dr. Javier Sanchez
Dr. John VanLeeuwen

Dr. Babafel Awosile
Dr. Alice Crook
Dr. Adel Elghafghuf
Dr. Larry Hammell
Dr. Jaewoon Jeong
Dr. J T McClure
Dr. Krishna Thakur
Dr. Gregor McEwan
Dr. Vince Repaci
Dr. Henrik Stryhn
Jenny Yu (note-taker)

Welcome:

The CVER Director, H. Stryhn, welcomed attendees and offered to chair the meeting unless someone else wanted to do that. There were no objections to H. Stryhn chairing the meeting.

1 Agenda and Minutes

The agenda was unanimously approved, as were the minutes from the previous AGM (8 March 2018).

2 New Business

2.1 Maintaining/enhancing faculty members in epidemiology

Several positions linked to CVER may become available within a relatively short time frame. 1) An initiative to establish a Tier 2 Canada Research Chair in Quantitative Veterinary Epidemiology has received official approval from UPEI's Vice-President Academic and Research to move forward with a potential nomination this fall; a timetable for the steps will be announced shortly. 2) A faculty position in Aquatic Population Health has been discussed and received support within the Department of Health Management and at AVC's Dean's Council; a final approval may be forthcoming shortly. 3) J. Sanchez has been involved in discussions about an industry-funded Research Chair in Risk Analysis (Section 3.7). 4) A Research Chair in Dairy Science with NSERC and industry funding is also being developed, and may be close to being finalized in the coming months. With two faculty members from the Epi group on leave, the group is currently short-staffed to contribute to and develop research projects. The AVC Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, L. Hammell, addressed this and indicated that other openings may be developed to compensate for the potential losses of the two positions currently effectively on hold (due to the leaves).

2.2 Maintaining/enhancing graduate students in epidemiology

The recruitment of new graduate students in epidemiology has been below what we see as optimal for several years, affecting the graduate courses and the research environment. Some promise for new funding opportunities is seen in a newly developed (draft) AVC Policy on Distribution of Overheads from Research Contracts, which mentions the allocation of funds to graduate student scholarships. Even when the policy has been approved at Dean's Council, the offering of scholarships may need to wait until sufficient funds have been accrued through overheads from research contracts, as described in the policy. In any case, in the longer term this seems like a good opportunity to attract new students. L. Hammell also mentioned that PEI is one of the few provinces that does not directly support graduate studies, and that it might be worth trying to lobby for such support to be established; CVER offered its support for an initiative along those lines.

2.3 Epi on the Island in 2019

Two courses, running June 3 - 7 and June 24 - 28 have been announced. The course information and detailed schedules have been posted on the course webpage: <http://cver.upei.ca/training/epi-on-the-island-2019/>. So far, we just have a few external registrants. As CERC funding for its members is no longer available, we do not expect as many local participants as in previous years. The usual message about how to register for local participants will be communicated to the group via the CVER e-mail list.

2.4 ISVEE 2021 – update

ISVEE 16 will be held in Halifax (9-13 August 2021), and AVC will host pre- and post-conference courses (plans are for 3-5 courses). The website www.isvee2021.ca has been built, but still there are a lot of things to do. Since the last CVER AGM, we have promoted ISVEE 16 in Halifax at the ISVEE 15 conference in Thailand, and we are planning to promote ISVEE at the next annual CAVEPM meeting in Saskatoon. The scientific and members of the ISVEE organizing committee sent out e-mails to get feedback about the number of the potential topics of interest for the conference courses. Current tasks for ISVEE 16 involve collecting and reviewing proposals for special sessions, and working with the organizing company to finalize sponsorships. We hope to get 60K from sponsors to help students from developing countries to participate in the conference courses.

2.5 Governance

2.5.1 Operations guidelines:

There has not been much progress since the last AGM. UPEI has a Centres Policy, which we do not comply with very well (e.g., the Director is appointed for 5 years and appointed by the Board of Governors; the Centre should be subjected to periodic reviews, at least once every 5 years; and the reporting should be heavily focused on financial transactions of the Centre). The aim is still to develop a simple set of operations guidelines as described in the minutes of the last AGM. The main activity so far has been on membership rules/categories.

2.5.2 Membership rules/categories:

H. Stryhn briefly presented the proposal included in the meeting documents. It was acknowledged that the original procedures are no longer current, so a formal change in procedure is warranted. Some discussion took place around the proposed procedures for

invitations to join CVER and whether affirmative e-mail responses were necessary. The Annual General Meeting unanimously approved the proposed new membership rules for CVER, with minor amendments in wording and procedure. The resulting text is listed below. As for procedural changes, an invitation to express interest in CVER will be accessible at the website, and default enrolments will only be instituted in straightforward cases.

“There will be only one membership category, and membership is for life unless an individual requests to be removed from the membership. New people (faculty, staff, post-docs, students) arriving to UPEI with interest in epidemiology, in particular through teaching or taking graduate epidemiology courses at AVC, will be invited to join CVER, and invitations may be extended to people in PEI but outside UPEI with interest in epidemiology as well. Members will be listed in two categories: currently affiliated to AVC (labeled “AVC-Active”), and other members (including members affiliated to AVC in the past, labeled “Other”). The General Meeting will be open to all members, and every member in attendance has voting rights and can serve in governance of CVER.”

2.5.3 Meetings:

We propose new CVER Research Seminars, twice a year (spring/fall) and as afternoon seminars with time for discussion and networking. Possibly external speakers will be invited. One specific aim with this activity is to engage CVER members outside the AVC group. The first seminar is being planned for early April by Michael Mclsaac, a new statistician in the School of Mathematical and Computational Sciences at UPEI with extensive experience with human health research. We hope to have Javier Sanchez and Ian Dohoo present in the fall on topics related to mediation.

2.5.4 Activities:

The CVER website is being continuously updated with news items; thanks to Jenny Yu for her diligent work on keeping things up-to-date. The two e-mail distribution lists hosted by CVER (cver; epivet) are running smoothly.

2.6 Other Activities

The second Aqua Epi conference will be hosted in Thailand in November 2019. Several CVER members are involved with this (L. Hammell, K. Thakur), and details will be communicated on the Cver e-mail distribution list.

3 Updates on Centres, groups, and projects

3.1 CERC – presented by Vince Repaci on behalf of Ian Gardner

The original CERC funding was set to cease by the end of March, but it will be extended by three months until the end of June 2019. The large funding through OFI is continuing, and some CERC projects will continue and/or expand under this umbrella. There are 4 independent projects currently from OFI. Two of them are Phase 1 projects and fully funded for their duration. Two of them are Phase 2 projects, and they will be reformulated and resubmitted in a new prioritization round. We hope and expect to receive at least the same funding as was originally allocated to UPEI for the Phase 2 projects. These projects will run until 2021.

3.2 CAHS – presented by Holly Burnley on behalf of Larry Hammell

One of the CAHS main activities is managing the Fish-iTrends Database. Matt Sanford is the primary person who has been working on that. A major undertaking over the past couple of years has been the upgrading of the Fish-iTrends software system. CAHS is involved in a range of other projects, including work with Halibut farms on PEI and evaluation of ISAV diagnostic tests. CAHS is continuing collaborating with the government of NL. They provide funding for us to support both external rotation students in the 4th year and summer students. There are plans to split the joint OIE collaborating centre with CAHS and Norwegian partners, but that is not expected to adversely affect CAHS activities.

3.3 Dairy Research Groups – presented by J McClure on behalf of Greg Keefe

There are 3 dairy cluster projects in 2018. One is a Canadian on-farm dairy - antimicrobial resistance and antimicrobial use surveillance program (Co-PIs J. Sanchez & L. Heider), which involves all 5 veterinary schools in Canada, PHAC and Memorial University. It involves 150 farms followed over 5 years in 5 Canadian regions and there will be at least 4 graduate students involved at various institutions. A PhD student has already been identified from Brazil and will arrive at AVC in early summer. The second project is the calf longevity study that is utilizing data that has been collected for the past 4 years already and we will continue to build upon it in collaboration with McGill University. Two PhD students will be working on this study, one student has been identified and we are still trying to find another one. The third project is looking at detecting B-lactamase producing *S. aureus* isolates from mastitis samples using Maldi-tof. It also involves an MSc student and is part of a larger proposal by CBMRN. Currently pending, a proposal to further build upon previous infectious disease surveillance programs in Atlantic Canada, mainly for BKD, John's disease and bovine leukosis, is being applied for with Canadian Agricultural Partnership.

3.4 Shellfish Research Group – presented by Henrik Stryhn on behalf of Jeff Davidson

Activity levels have been somewhat low due to the leave (and subsequent resignation) of Sophie St. Hilaire. Projects during this time frame focused on mussel productivity and tunicate infestations, oyster seed enhancement and production, and Irish moss - green crab interactions. A risk simulation study involves the characterization of shellfish movements in Nova Scotia.

3.5 Sir James Dunn Animal Welfare Centre – by Alice Crook

Over the past 2 years, the Centre funded 8 research projects. These projects have involved graduate students and veterinary summer research students. The Centre also funded several service projects through which investigators work with community groups to provide direct services to animals. The SJDAWC's annual "Animal Welfare in Practice" conference was on whale stranding in 2018, and the Centre was the Platinum Sponsor for the 2018 annual conference of the International Society for Applied Ethology (ISAE), which took place at UPEI from July 30 – August 3. A. Crook is retiring at the end of April 2019. The search for a Director of the SJDAWC (tenure-track faculty position) is underway.

3.6 Smallholder Dairy Research Group – by John VanLeeuwen

We are now winding down the 4-year interdisciplinary project funded by the Community Foundations of Canada (CFC) which has entered its final year. There are 6 graduate students involved in this project (known as Queen Elizabeth II Scholars – QES), and additionally 8 UPEI students (4 veterinary students and 4 nutrition students) and many UPEI professors. During 2017-18, there were two more rotations of 3 UPEI veterinary students and 6 Nairobi veterinary students each year, providing training and services to animal health professionals and smallholder dairy farmers in Kenya. In 2018, another 4 years of

funding was secured for a second phase of research involving smallholder dairy farmers in central Kenya through the QES program. This second phase will have another 3 Kenyans coming to UPEI for a Ph.D. and 2 M.Sc. degrees, and 13 UPEI veterinary and science undergraduate students going to Kenya for 3 month internships. Topics researched through these programs include infectious disease control, agroforestry, sexed semen, hormone therapy, cow comfort, calf comfort, cell phone training, and enhanced nutrition of farm families and school-aged children.

Smallholder dairy farm projects were also conducted in 3 other countries. Three projects were completed by one graduate student on milk urea nitrogen in Thailand, along with a nutrition project in Colombia by another graduate student. C. Revie has been working on mobile phone-based diagnosis and treatment in Ethiopia. Currently, the use of the mobile phone app to respiratory-related conditions in small ruminants is of particular interest. Funding for this has been obtained from Brooke, a UK-based animal welfare charity.

3.7 Antimicrobial Resistance and Risk Analysis Groups – by Javier Sanchez

The AMR Group is currently involved in three major project applications. The first is FARMS-SAFE, a collaboration with Kristen Reyher from the University of Bristol and Rodolfo Luzbel from the National University of Argentina, on Future-proofing Antibacterial resistance Risk Management Surveillance and Stewardship in the Argentinian Farming Environment. The second is a one health project, in collaboration with the Technical University of Denmark, on issues of AMR transmission and metagenomics, utilizing sewage, retail meat and human samples. The third is a DFC Cluster III project, a collaboration with Deborah Adewole (Poultry Industry Research Chair from Dalhousie University) on surveillance of disease prevalence, antibiotic use, and antibiotic resistance in poultry farms in Atlantic Canada. A current “Fieldetect” project received 5K funding from NRC IRAP and has a visiting PhD student (Ana Colonia Orocco) from Colombia working on it. Also a master student is working on AMRSP in dogs with AVC hospital records.

For the risk analysis group, we have had discussions to get funding for a Research Chair in Risk Analysis for CRVE-net / CFIA and the OIE Collaborating Centre for Epidemiology and Risk Assessment of Aquatic Animal Diseases. In addition, we have been working with a consulting company based in Calgary, involving a 5-year program in Vietnam related with food safety and risk assessment. Another project related with risk analysis is a South American collaboration on developing expertise to analyze surveillance data, e.g. on foot and mouth disease. The main issue is that South America stopped vaccinating against foot-and-mouth diseases. Also related to training is the Epi on the Island 2019 summer course (Risk modelling for animal health and food safety), as well as work with the University of Minnesota to develop online courses for risk-based surveillance.

4. Other Business

No businesses not covered in the previous items were brought up at this point.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:10 p.m.